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A CHINESE KANSHITSU OR
DRIED LACQUER FIGURE

THE only place where Japanese sculpture can be really well studied is Japan itself; though this, of course, is perfectly proper and a great advantage to the trav-

The Japanese government and private enterprise made our loss good as far as could be done by excellent publications and reproductions in which are shown and described all the most important works of art; in consequence even those who can not go to Japan can acquire a very precise



FIGURE OF DRIED LACQUER
CHINESE, T'ANG PERIOD

eler, it would be quite convenient if it were not so. A very wise Japanese law declared, at a moment when great changes threatened to strip the country of its greatest works of art, that all the best pieces were national treasures, they were catalogued and photographed, they could be called on at any moment for exhibition in the national museums and they could not leave the country.

knowledge of its art through these valuable books and become familiar with the wonderful treasures of the Horiuji temples, the museums of Nara, Kyoto, and Tokio.

There we see the serene figures, well cared for by generations of devotees, which show not only the greatness of early Japanese sculpture and its development, but also the reflection of the Chinese sculpture of those days which inspired them. In this

respect the Japanese collections are particularly valuable because China has suffered more than Japan from revolutions, wars, and changes of taste, and what remains of its sculpture is not so easy of access.

While the early Chinese statues which we know are mostly in stone and the Japanese generally bronze or wood, clay was used to a great extent at an early date in both China and Japan. Of the Chinese clay figures we know best the lightly fired tomb figures of the T'ang period which have come to light in quantities, the larger pieces have suffered too much from time and restoration to be of great interest; in the Japanese temples and museums we find small statuettes similar to the T'ang figures, but also large life-size figures modeled in clay with a mixture of vegetable fibre. This primitive medium, probably the earliest one used, is extremely appropriate and answers to the artist's wants but is very fragile; in consequence different means were devised to render the clay figures more durable. Vegetable fibre was mixed with the clay to bind it together; later, particles of mica were used for the same purpose; sometimes, specially in China, the clay was fired, even glazed, producing over life-size pottery figures; it was painted to hold together better, or covered with cloths dipped in lacquer which hardened and formed a basis for further modeling. This was the origin of the Kanshitsu or dried lacquer process with which we now deal. It consisted of modeling with partly dried lacquer or vegetable fibre soaked in lacquer which when it had completely dried could be finished by carving.

The advantages of this process were that the finished piece was perfectly strong and enduring, absolutely proof against the worms and insects which in those countries attack wood, and capable of very subtle and fine modeling like wax, with none of the difficulties and risks of bronze casting. According to Japanese records, it was a technique introduced from China in the middle of the seventh century, it was used only during a comparatively short period after which the lacquered wooden figure superseded it entirely. In China it was

used during the T'ang period, then abandoned and revived in the Yüan and early Ming times.

The Japanese pieces which are considered the earliest, that is, dating from the middle of the seventh century, have been built upon a rough wooden structure plastered over with lacquer, then because lacquer was scarce they were made over an empty core built up of wooden splints or basketwork, or better still the figure was roughly modeled in clay, covered with cloths dipped in lacquer, and on this foundation the details were built up in a material consisting of vegetable fibres soaked in lacquer, and pure lacquer more or less dried for the outer coating and the finer details. These, after the whole had sufficiently hardened, could be carved and cut down according to the artist's requirements. Finally, the core was cut out from the base and a statue remained, light in weight but perfectly strong.

In the Japanese collections are very subtly modeled pieces which show all the qualities of wax handled by the artist, some are extremely elaborate with complicated haloes which suggest fine metalwork. Though the material is fairly resisting, repairs have sometimes to be made which are admirably well done by clever workmen in Nara who have absolutely mastered the technique.

Though, as said before, the Japanese specimens are well represented amongst the temple treasures and though we know that the technique came originally from China, up to lately the only Chinese piece known was a sitting portrait figure in the Nara Museum called Yima-Koji. It is therefore particularly satisfactory that our Museum has been able to acquire a seated priestly figure, possibly a Buddha, sitting with crossed legs, the head erect. Both hands are unfortunately missing and the curls of the head have been curiously cut off, perhaps for the value of their original gilding, but for the rest few repairs have been made except at the lower edge. The body and face were originally gilt and the mantle, the Buddhist priest's robe, was colored; interesting details of the ornamental border in T'ang design remain.

This figure, together with another very similar one of carved and lacquered wood, and a much damaged dried lacquer figure, are reported to have been found under the remains of the Tai Fu Szu temple in Cheng ting fu, province of Chihli. Judging from the style of the figure it belongs to the later T'ang period. The head has the distant look of the Buddha but is lifelike and impressive; the bare back and shoulder and the thin Oriental arm are modeled with great feeling. The figure will be shown in Room E 10 after the rearrangement of the galleries for the Fiftieth Anniversary Exhibition of the Museum.

S. C. B. R.

GEOFFROY TORY

THERE is in the Print Room a Parisian book of hours, dated 1545, which bears the imprint of Thielman Kerver and contains unusually good impressions of the thirteen large woodcuts designed by Geoffroy Tory, for his *Horae* according to the Roman use of 1524. An uncolored copy, it is crisp and clean, and in an unusually fine state of preservation. As it does not appear in the bibliographies of Brunet and Lacombe, and is inaccurately described in Bohatta's check list (No. 1105), a full description is given in the footnote.¹

This having been the first example of

¹Hore, in laudem beatissime/virginis Marie, Ad usum/Romanum/1545/(mark of Thielman Kerver) Parhisijs, apud Thielman/num Kerver in vico sancti/Jacobi sub signo cratis./

The volume contains 208 leaves (+, a—v, A8, B4, A8, B4, aa, bb8). The calendar, for twenty-three years, from 1544 to 1566, is on +i^{vo} and is followed by the Almanach, each month being preceded by a small cut. On a6 come the Lord's Prayer, Angelic Salutation, Creed, etc., followed at the top of b by the "In principio erat verbum," etc., from St. John, with which the body of the *Horae* begins. On A come "aulcunes belles preparations" for receiving the sacrament, on A prayers to the Virgin and St. Genevieve, on A 7^{vo} the Ladder of Perfection, and a table of contents on bb 6^{vo}. At the end is the mark of Kerver, over the following words: Prostant Parisijs apud Thiel/mannum Kerver in vico diui/Jacobi sub insigni Cratis./ ubi etiam impressa sunt./ M.D.xlv.

It contains the thirteen large woodcuts from Tory's 1524 *Horae* and twelve small ones at the head of each month in the calendar.

Tory's work to enter the Museum collection, it may not be out of place to tell something about him and the various things which he did, for, notwithstanding our fragmentary knowledge of the man, he appears as one of the most typical figures of the French Renaissance.

Born of humble parents at Bourges about 1480, but ten years or so after the first introduction of printing into France, he managed somehow to attend the university at that city, where he acquired an easy acquaintance with Latin literature. From the lecture halls of Bourges he wandered to Italy, at first attending the college of the Sapienza at Rome and later at Bologna sitting under the celebrated Philip Beroaldus, then at the height of his reputation as one of the great Latinists. Shortly before 1505 he was in Paris where, according to tradition, he eked out a living as editor of texts and corrector for the press. The first work with which his name can be identified is the edition of Pomponius Mela, which Gilles de Gourmont, the first printer of Greek at Paris, printed in 1508. He seems to have made reputation for himself by this, for in 1509, in spite of his comparative youth, he was installed as professor at the collège du Plessis. While occupying this chair he continued to edit books, among others an edition of Aeneas Sylvius' *Cosmography* for Henri Estienne (1509), and for the de Marnef (1510) one of Berosus Babilonicus, the notorious forgery of Anniius of Viterbo. In the latter year Tory saw through the press an edition of the *Institutions* of Quintilian, which was followed at a distance of two years by the *Ten Books of Architecture* of Leone Battista Alberti.

From the mere names on this short and imperfect list of books edited and seen through the press by Tory within the space of five years, we are enabled to see something of the energy and hard work which were his distinguishing traits, and also a little of the enormous self-confidence which let him turn his hand to so many different things. While doing this editorial work, moreover, he was continuing his labors as teacher, having exchanged his professorship at the collège du Plessis